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**National Agricultural Statistics Service
United States Department of Agriculture**

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NEWS

For Immediate Use

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Preliminary Census Results Give First Look at Changing Face of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) announced that preliminary demographic data from the 2002 Census of Agriculture - the Nation's largest agricultural information-gathering project - are now available at the state and national levels. Final, complete data for Puerto Rico are now available.

"The new 2002 Census results show us the great diversity of people involved in New Jersey agriculture," said Becky Cross, New Jersey State Statistician. "African American, American Indian, Hispanic, and women operators are all significant contributors to agriculture, and their numbers have all increased since 1997."

The 2002 Census of Agriculture serves as the most comprehensive source of data describing U.S. agriculture. "This Census incorporates collection of new data and improved methodologies to enable us to present the most complete and accurate picture of U.S. agriculture available," said NASS Administrator Ron Bosecker.

Several new measures were included in the 2002 Census of Agriculture, including information about more than one operator per farm. "For the first time, the Census provides us with measures of the total number of people operating our farms and ranches, as well as the number of households sharing in farm income. This underscores the importance of agriculture to both our local communities and their economies. Women have long been significant, but largely unacknowledged, contributors to agriculture. So I am pleased that NASS is also presenting the first ever comprehensive measure of the number of women involved in day-to-day farming and ranching decisions," U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman said.

Demographic data contained in the report include sex of operator, residence on or off the farm, days worked off the farm, years present on farm, age group categories, race, and number of persons living in each household. For example, preliminary results for New Jersey show:

- The average age of New Jersey agricultural producers in 2002 was 55.1 years old.
- Thirty-three percent of the total number of New Jersey agricultural producers were women in 2002, and the number of women who were principle operators increased by 21 percent from 1997.
- Principal New Jersey operators of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin increased by 25 percent from 1997 to 2002.
- New Jersey African American operators increased by 46 percent, and American Indian principal operators increased by 25 percent from 1997 to 2002.
- Eighty-six percent of New Jersey's agricultural operations are still run by individuals or families. Seventy percent of all farm operations produced less than \$10,000 in sales from agricultural products in 2002.

Final 2002 Census of Agriculture data at national, state, and county levels will be released on June 3, 2004. That report will provide first time facts about organic crop acreage and sales, production contracts, farm computer and Internet use, plus the broader, full range of traditional census data including land use and ownership; acres irrigated; crop acreage and quantities harvested; livestock and poultry inventories; value of products sold; value of production contracts; participation in Federal farm programs; and market value of land and buildings. The Census of Agriculture is currently conducted every 5 years; the first was conducted in conjunction with the 1840 population census.

All reports from the 2002 Census of Agriculture will be available free through the NASS website at www.usda.gov/nass/

For additional information regarding the Census, call the NASS Hotline at
1-800-727-9540.